



1. Discovering Poplar Point: Gateway, Signature Park, Cultural Destination, Neighborhood Resource

Poplar Point, as envisioned by the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative, will contribute in every way to the return of gracious natural settings, environmental leadership, urban waterfront life and a particular character rooted in community history along the Anacostia River. Even more important perhaps, while delivering on the full range of AWI objectives, the new places and spaces proposed for Poplar Point can be realized in significant part within the first five years of project implementation.

Nearby residents, community groups and business people in the neighborhoods around historic Anacostia have seen the potential at Poplar Point for many years. These statements of vision and community needs have been a foundation for detailed design and programming.

Today, Poplar Point is not even on the map for most residents, visitors and decision-makers in the District of Columbia. Nearly half the site is fenced off from the public, developed with buildings encumbered by elements of the regional highway system. This plan seeks, over time, to tear down those fences, relocate non-contributing uses and rebuild bridges and highways to feature rather than limit the life of Poplar Point. When maps of Washington DC are reprinted for the new decade 2010, Poplar Point, the features of the full Anacostia Riverfront System and the vibrant community surrounding Historic Anacostia will be on every map.

Poplar Point needs a public commitment to a vision for a great park, a constituency to sustain the necessary phases of activity and investment, and the cooperative effort of the AWI Memorandum of Understanding and other agencies to commit available funds, time and creativity to the site and its context. With this in place, Poplar Point can be:



1. A model for site restoration with magnificent new wetlands linked to a newly revealed Stickfoot Creek, ripe with the plant and animal life of a healthy ecosystem – all essential to improving water quality in the Anacostia River.
2. A beautiful new waterfront park with places to stroll, to play, to learn, and to enjoy an expansive view of the River and surrounding neighborhoods.
3. A celebration of the rich cultural history of Anacostia, its arts, its landscape, its heroes, its lessons, and its contributions to civic and economic life.
4. A place of culture and entertainment to enjoy an evening performance in an amphitheater, visit a new memorial or museum, and stroll through an outdoor sculpture garden or a memorial garden
5. A symbolic front door to the Anacostia Waterfront and the Anacostia Riverfront System with an efficient and interconnected transportation system linking trains, buses, shuttles, bicycles, trails and water taxis at the existing Metro station – right in the park.
6. A place for new private investment in a living/working neighborhood of mixed incomes and expanded choices for all.

Figure 2: Bird's-eye view of Poplar Point framed by the crescent-shaped Anacostia Drive

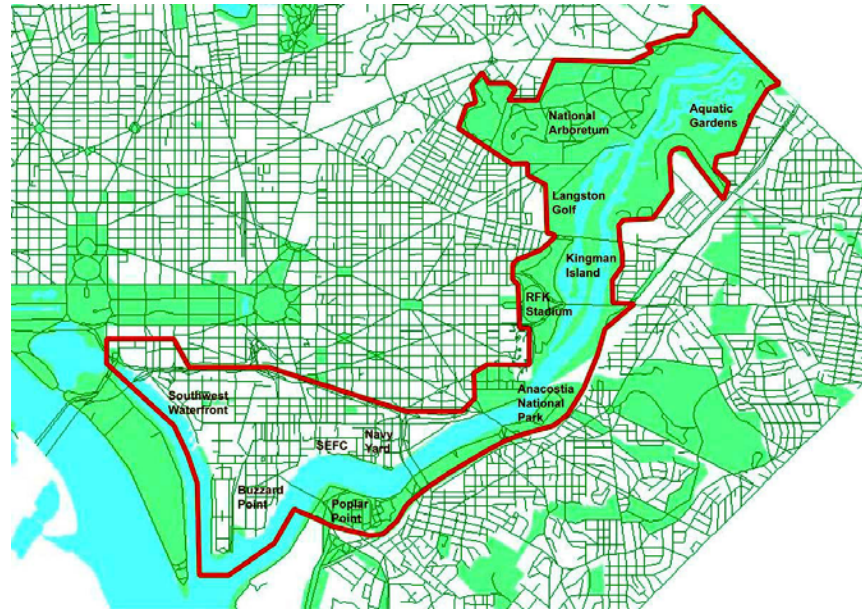


Figure 3: AWI MOU boundary map

AWI Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Partners

Government of the District of Columbia
General Services Administration
United States Department of the Interior
Naval District of Washington
District of Columbia Housing Authority
District of Columbia Sports and Entertainment Commission
District of Columbia Water and Sewer Authority
Marine Barracks of Washington
National Capital Planning Commission
National Capital Revitalization Corporation
United States Army Military District of Washington
United States Army Corps of Engineers
United States Department of Labor
United States Department of Transportation
United States Department of Housing and Urban Development
United States Environmental Protection Agency
United States Office of Management and Budget
United States Department of Agriculture
United States Small Business Administration
Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

A. Getting There

1 The AWI Framework

For too long, the Anacostia River and its surrounding neighborhoods have been neglected:

- The river's water quality is severely polluted;
- Obsolete transportation infrastructure isolates neighborhoods from the river and separates them from waterfront parklands;
- Waterfront open space is underutilized and suffers from severe disinvestment;
- Neighborhoods along the river are some of the poorest and most underserved in the city.

On March 22, 2000, Mayor Anthony Williams brought together twenty federal and District agencies who own land or have jurisdiction along the Anacostia River to sign the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative (AWI) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The AWI MOU creates a partnership to transform the Anacostia River from the city's forgotten river to a gem that could rival any urban waterfront in the United States or the world.

The vision of the AWI is of a clean and vibrant waterfront with parks, recreation uses and urban waterfront settings – places for people to meet, relax, encounter nature and experience the heritage of the waterfront neighborhoods. The AWI also seeks to ensure that those neighborhoods and people living along the Anacostia River for whom the river has been distant, out of reach and unusable share the social and economic benefits derived from a revitalized waterfront.

To support the efforts of the AWI, the DC Office of Planning (OP) established a steering committee of the MOU agencies, an advisory group of community leaders and a collaborative team of consultants. Working with the District and federal partner agencies, the AWI Team has produced a Draft Framework Plan to guide the revitalization effort. This Framework Plan identifies five critical themes to guide the creation of a great waterfront along the Anacostia River.

These five themes are:

A Clean and Active River

The AWI charts the course for environmental healing and the rejuvenation of water-dependent activities on the Anacostia River. Pollution must be mitigated, run-off controlled, streams and wetlands restored and water activities promoted.

Eliminating Barriers and Gaining Access

The AWI reconsiders the design of transportation infrastructure in order to gain access to waterfront lands and better serve waterfront neighborhoods. The community must be able to get to the waterfront on beautiful streets and bridges that become gateways to the river's parks and amenities.

A Great Urban Riverfront Park System

The AWI creates a system of interconnected and continuous waterfront parks that will be linked by the Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail. The Anacostia River Parks system will rival the great waterfront parks of the world and provide open space for adjoining neighborhoods, the city and the nation.

Cultural Destinations of Distinct Character

The AWI enhances and protects the distinct character of regional destinations along the waterfront. This will help create a vibrant waterfront that celebrates the cultural heritage of the river's neighborhoods, the city and the nation.

Building Strong Waterfront Neighborhoods

The AWI promotes sustainable economic development and re-connects the city to the river through new neighborhoods and the waterfront park system by creating opportunities to live, work and play along the river.



2 A Local and Regional Constituency

The underpinnings of a truly successful plan must be based in a comprehensive and inclusive process that involves community groups, landowners, government agencies, and the general public. This is particularly important for the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative due to the various stakeholders ranging from individual citizens concerned about a piece of the whole riverfront to the National Park Service who is the primary caretaker for the Anacostia Park.

The path to developing the plan for Poplar Point and the entire waterfront included a series of meetings that examined local and regional potentials for the Anacostia Waterfront as well as Poplar Point’s role as a gateway to that waterfront.

Local Meetings and Workshops

During the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative, the DC Office of Planning (DCOP) and its partners held several meetings that focused exclusively on Poplar Point. These meetings were held with the understanding that the plan for Poplar Point would build upon the numerous reports, plans, and community revitalization efforts already completed for the surrounding residential neighborhoods, commercial districts and park systems. These efforts involved the nearby neighborhoods of Historic Anacostia, Barry’s Farm, and Fairlawn, among others.

The local meetings and workshop discussions sought to understand past and current community efforts in light of the potentials for the full Anacostia Waterfront corridor. Opportunities for discussion, presentations, commentary and hands-on efforts to develop physical plan directions and a program of activities for Poplar Point were provided at local meetings in venues near Poplar Point as well as at workshops at the larger district-wide meetings.

During these meetings and workshops many ideas and concerns were expressed that focused on the need for Poplar Point to be returned to a community asset and a healthy natural environment. Highlights included youth groups lobbying for environmental clean-up and site stewardship initiatives, concepts for gardens, cultural, educational and recreational facilities of local and national importance,

and ideas about linking the river and Poplar Point to economic development plans and job development in Anacostia. Many of these ideas formed the basis for the creation of the site plan for Poplar Point presented in the Target Area Plan.

District-wide and Regional Outreach

The importance of Poplar Point as a green gateway to the River corridor, a site for dramatic improvement in park facilities, a site to benefit from regional transportation investments, and a cultural anchor to the Anacostia Park also served as a focus in District-wide AWI meetings that explored a framework for action from the Potomac to the Maryland border.

The first step in the planning process was to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the project site including its history, usage and physical characteristics. An important component of this process was to understand and then build upon the numerous revitalization and planning efforts that have been completed for Poplar Point and the surrounding neighborhoods. These include the following:

- NCPC Memorials and Museums Master Plan – proposal for athletic fields, major Museum or memorial, office and residential use
- East of River Plan – proposal for commercial mixed use, big-box retail, Consortium College Campus, and housing
- WMATA parking lot and related use
- Frederick Douglass Memorial Gardens and Arboretum
- Earth Conservation Corps – proposals for bridges, water taxi
- National African-American Museum and Cultural Complex
- Charter School (under construction)

The outreach process started with a kick-off meeting on March 13, 2001, where Mayor Anthony Williams introduced the AWI initiative with officials from eighteen Federal and District agencies in attendance. Following this, a series of workshops, presentations, and focus group sessions were held in which Anacostia community members, local and city-wide interest groups, and other interested citizens participated by communicating their goals, ideas, and input towards developing a plan for Poplar Point. Conclusions of the planning effort were presented at an Anacostia Park Summit held on April 3, 2002. Refer to the Appendix for a list of key meeting and workshops.



Figure 4: Aerial view of existing conditions at Poplar Point

B. The Plan for Poplar Point

1 Driving Forces of the Poplar Point Plan

In completing the public process, the project team uncovered a number of key components that help to shape the plan for Poplar Point. These so-called “drivers” of the plan are concerns by key stakeholders that heavily influenced the plan and thus the future of Poplar Point. The “drivers” represent the challenges on the site that must be resolved to make the plan effective.

Driver #1 Getting to the Site – Changing the transportation system around the site and improving access to the park and waterfront are key drivers in the plan. Major changes include the conversion of the Metro Station to a multimodal terminal, realignment of the South Capitol Street Bridge, and adding points of access for pedestrians and vehicles from the surrounding communities.

Driver #2 Healing the Land – Restoring the natural environment, especially wetlands, is an important component of the entire AWI. On Poplar Point, this includes the Stickfoot sewer outfall and creek restoration, wetland restoration, and protection of habitat.

Driver #3 Underutilized Land – Creating a great park for the community, the DC Region and the Country is tantamount to the process and this idea was expressed at nearly every public meeting. Ideas were expressed for specific park components – museums, gardens, ballfields, natural settings, and formal landscapes – and with nearly 100 acres of land to work with, there is room to incorporate many ideas.

Driver #4 Neighborhood Development – Enhancing economic and neighborhood development opportunities for the community were expressed at many public meetings. This includes reinforcing the role of businesses along Martin Luther King Avenue, providing new mixed-use development along Howard Road at Poplar Point, and creating a program of cultural/institutional uses for East of the River to celebrate its contribution to history.



2 The Poplar Point Plan

The Poplar Point Study Area, as defined in this plan, encompasses the area west of the Anacostia freeway, bounded by the 11th Street Bridges to the north and Bolling Air Force Base to the south. The area contains the U.S. Park Police and National Park Service Complex and Helipad, the Anacostia Metro station and WMATA parking garage, the former Architect of the Capitol nurseries, private parcels along Howard Road, a publicly accessible shoreline, 60 acres of managed meadows, and a maze of roads and ramps leading to adjacent freeways. For the most part, Poplar Point is isolated from the community and underutilized as the great waterfront public resource that it can be.

The plan for Poplar Point brings this area to life as a significant new waterfront park, befitting its role as a gateway to Anacostia Park. The new park will extend the full length of the area from the Point to the 11th Street Bridge. It will be defined by a crescent-shaped Anacostia Drive east of its present alignment. The new Drive will be the western edge of a mix of uses providing a sweeping and lively city edge to the park. The parkland will be programmed to contain a range of uses to serve the local community and visitors. It will have gardens, memorials, museums, outdoor performance areas, trails, wetlands, a daylighted Stickfoot Creek, ball fields, and a variety of landscape treatments suitable for its diverse uses. A complete description of the Plan is in Chapter 3. Key recommendations of the Plan:

1. Site remediation, wetlands restoration, and daylighting of Stickfoot Creek.
2. Multi-modal transportation improvements including better community access to a range of transit such as Metro, water taxi, circulators, shuttles, trails, and bike paths.
3. Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail and the rehabilitation of the Poplar Point shoreline. Reconfiguration of the Anacostia Drive away from the water's edge in order to create great park spaces and to keep vehicles away from the heart of the park.



Figure 5: Elements of the Poplar Point Plan



Figure 6: Natural resources at Poplar Point need protection



Figure 7: Neighborhood development in Anacostia is a key objective

4. Local street improvements to enhance links to Historic Anacostia and provide better community access into the Park. This will include improvements to Howard Road, Good Hope Road and the extension of W Street into the Park.
5. Responsible and compatible mixed-use development on the privately held land along Howard Road. Residential, commercial, and institutional uses may be considered. The Plan also envisions a mix of uses on land recovered from moving the Frederick Douglass Bridge south, extending the Howard Road community and Anacostia Drive to the water's edge.
6. Connections to ongoing initiatives in Historic Anacostia along MLK Avenue, especially to the proposed Gateway site development, the potential joint development opportunity site at Howard and MLK, other infill sites along MLK, and destinations such as the Anacostia Museum, the Frederick Douglass House, and St. Elizabeth's campus.
7. New cultural and community-related uses to be sited near the Metro parking garage to mitigate its massive scale and provide a public edge to the Park as well as easy access from the MLK corridor.
8. Sites for museums, memorials, and gardens within the Park in locations that take advantage of expansive views of the Capitol building and natural features of the Anacostia.
9. Highway improvements designed to reduce traffic along MLK and on area bridges. The AWI framework recommends the replacement of the Frederick Douglass Bridge and reconfiguration of the 11th Street Bridges. For more detail, see the AWI Framework Plan.
10. While the full Plan will be realized over the course of 10 to 15 years, a number of significant elements can begin right away. In Chapter 3, a recommended phasing strategy is outlined, along with a list of projects that have secured funding. The implementation strategy seeks to complete a number of early actions such as site remediation and park access improvements within the first 5 years.